

News Release

Natural Resource Aviator new Chief Pilot at UMC

*By Dan Svedarsky on Thursday, January 5, 2006*The aviation program at UMC got a significant boost recently with the hiring of Mike Vivion, an experienced natural resources pilot from Fairbanks, Alaska. "Vivion has flown for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service for over 25 years in a variety of field and weather situations and we are indeed fortunate to have his wealth of experience and enthusiasm added to our program", according to Dan Svedarsky, Head of the Natural Resources Department at UMC which contains the aviation program. "We are unique in North America in having a program of this type and now we have one of the best in the business to take it to the next level."

Natural Resource Aviation and Law Enforcement Aviation were added as areas of emphasis within the aviation program 3 years ago at the urging of natural resource agencies including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Former Chief Pilot with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and search committee member, Richard Stoltman, notes, "The industry is pleased that the Crookston campus of the University responded to meet these personnel needs due to the impending retirement of many agency pilots. And now they have hired one of the top four natural resource pilots in the country to lead the program." Other aviation emphases offered at Crookston include Agricultural Aviation and Business Aviation. UMC cooperates with the University of North Dakota Aerospace program, which provides aircraft and basic flight instruction, all at the Crookston Airport Training Facility. Some 40 students are enrolled in UMC's aviation majors with Natural Resources Aviation being one of the fast growing programs on campus.

Vivion will replace retiring Chief Pilot, Larry Leake. "We are so pleased with the years of loyal service and leadership that Larry has provided to the program and the number of pilots that he's put in the air," added Svedarsky. "Some of his former students are now flying for Alaska Airlines, Sun-Country Airlines, Mesaba Airlines, as well as a number who are independent operators in the agricultural aviation industry."

Vivion plans to expand the aviation program to include in-service training for agency pilots who need updated training to learn of new technological developments and safety procedures. "Safety and efficiency are high priorities in every agency's aviation program. We hope to offer agencies well qualified applicants for specialist positions having piloting responsibilities, as well as a menu of training opportunities that will improve the skills and performance of their journeyman pilots," Vivion notes.

Vivion is a sought after speaker at aviation conferences and training seminars as well as being a published author in trade magazines and professional journals. Vivion is planning mission specific exercises for aviation students in which they can assist in real-world applications such as wildlife surveys in Minnesota and North Dakota and collecting radio-telemetry data from marked animals. Vivion also has experience in law enforcement applications of aviation and will be looking to expand the program in those areas as well. Vivion's agency experience will also be an asset to students in other majors as they seek employment with federal and state agencies.

UMC is a four-year baccalaureate degree granting institution and other majors within the Natural Resources Department include: Wildlife Management, Natural Resource Management, Park Management, Natural Resources Law Enforcement, Water Resources Management, Golf and Turf Management, and Horticulture. For more information about UMC's programs, contact Dan Svedarsky at [dsvedars@umn.edu](mailto:dsvedars@umn.edu) or 218-281-8129, or Sue Legare at [slegare@umn.edu](mailto:slegare@umn.edu) or 218-281-8128.

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